

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 196

By Tracy

A RESOLUTION to name a certain bridge on US Highway 64 in Bedford County in memory of Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson, United States Army.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges to honor the memory of those courageous members of the United States Armed Forces who gave their lives in the defense of our nation; and

WHEREAS, no person is more deserving of this honor than the late Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson, United States Army, who was killed in combat on May 5, 1968 at the Battle of An Bao in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, the beloved son of Huffman and Louise Stephenson of Shelbyville, Donald R. Stephenson was a 1965 graduate of Shelbyville Central High School, where he was an active member of the FFA, excelling in raising and judging beef cattle; he won the State of Tennessee Junior Championship in 1965 with his purebred Shorthorn heifer; and

WHEREAS, after graduation in 1965, Donald Stephenson joined the family business at Mid-South Distributing with plans to someday take over the reins of the business from his father but, instead, the young Donald Stephenson answered his country's call to serve and entered the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, after receiving advanced infantry training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson reported to duty overseas in the Republic of Vietnam during December of 1967 and was assigned to A Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division as a radio telephone operator, serving closely with his platoon leader 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Hinton; and

WHEREAS, on May 5, 1968, A Company was sent out to investigate enemy activity two miles from their base camp and was ambushed by a full regiment of the North Vietnamese

Regular Army with devastating results. Specialist 4 Stephenson, along with all of the officers and many of his fellow soldiers were killed at what has been called the “Battle of An Bao,” which lasted for two days and resulted in a significant number of American casualties; and

WHEREAS, like thousands of others of this nation's sons and daughters, Donald R. Stephenson served with great courage and gallantry, giving his life for his country and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star for Valor, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge for his heroic actions; and

WHEREAS, a request has been submitted to name the bridge over Flat Creek on US Highway 64 in Bedford County to permanently commemorate the singular patriotism, courage and commitment to duty of the late Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson, a bridge he crossed almost daily on his trips to his beloved Bedford County farm and that he last passed over when he was laid to rest on May 22, 1968, at the Wheel Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily and respectfully concurs with this excellent proposal; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the first bridge over Flat Creek on US Highway 64 outside Shelbyville in Bedford County headed west toward Lewisburg is hereby designated as the “Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson Memorial Bridge” in recognition of the life of valor and death in combat of Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson, United States Army.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such bridge on US Highway 64 over Flat Creek in Bedford County as the “Specialist 4 Donald R. Stephenson Memorial Bridge” as a lasting tribute to this American hero. The cost of such signage shall be funded in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated, § 54-1-133.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the Commissioner of Transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Transportation.